

## **Comments for the DEC hearing – December 1, 2011 – State Theater**

Sara Hess from Ithaca. The drinking water from my faucet starts as surface water. Six-mile Creek and its tributaries feed into 2 reservoirs owned and operated by the City of Ithaca. I've studied the watershed map for 6 Mile Creek. It's big. Ithaca's water comes from an area that includes about 1/3 of Caroline, 2 chunks of Dryden, part of Danby and part of the Town of Ithaca. I also looked at the map that shows gas leases in those areas and saw that a great deal of land has been leased to the gas companies.

Many experts have told us the biggest environmental threat of water contamination is from human error that leads to surface spills. If drilling is allowed in Ithaca's watershed, we know from Pennsylvania's experience that accidents like overturned trucks, faulty valves on storage tanks, or leaking open pits would carry contamination downhill to the nearest valley and creek. Ithaca's water filtering and treatment system is not designed to remove the toxic waste nor hazardous chemicals used for shale drilling.

So what protection does the DEC give to the 30,000 people who drink Ithaca's water? Well, hardly any.

The two reservoirs would have a 2000 foot buffer zone where no drilling pads would be allowed. But the real exposure is in the streams and creeks that fill those reservoirs. Here, the DEC relies on the 1992 setback rule of 150 feet from a public stream. This regulation was put in place 20 years before shale gas drilling came along. In today's world, Marcellus drilling requires 27,000 gallons of chemicals to be transported and used for each well that is drilled. But here's the kicker: In the

**July** draft of the sGEIS a longer set-back protection of 500 feet was put on either side of a tributary that feeds into a public drinking water supply. But in the **October** draft, that protection was mysteriously is taken out, with no explanation. I have to wonder: who made that decision and why?

Colorado has a stream setback rule of 300 feet; New Mexico, 1000 feet, but NY has only 150 feet.

If contamination reached Ithaca's reservoirs, no remediation could replace the loss of municipal water, and the replacement cost would be in the billions.

I'm here to say that the any gas drilling activity within the watersheds of any municipal water supply must be prohibited.

(sGEIS: 7.1.12.1, Page 7-75 and 7.1.12.2 page 7-76 and Page 7-78)